

Modern American Music Series

ML 4492

AARON COPLAND

SEXTET FOR STRING QUARTET, CLARINET AND PIANO

THE JULLIARD STRING QUARTET (DAVID OPPENHEIM, Clarinet: LEONID HAMBRO, Piano)

ELLIS KOHS

CHAMBER CONCERTO FOR VIOLA AND STRING NONET
FERENC MOLNAR, Viola, with STRING NONET

Quartet

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MODERN AMERICAN MUSIC SERIES

The music in this series was recorded under the supervision of the composers.

ML 4492

4.98

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Copland:
Sextet for String Quartet,
Clarinet and Piano

Kohs:
Chamber Concerto for
Viola and String Nonet

AARON COPLAND

SEXTET FOR STRING QUARTET,
CLARINET AND PIANO (1937)

Juilliard String Quartet (R. Mann, R. Koff, Violins;
R. Hillyer, Viola; A. Winograd, 'Cello)
David Oppenheim, Clarinet; Leonid Hambro, Piano

ELLIS KOHS

CHAMBER CONCERTO FOR
VIOLA AND STRING NONET (1949)

Ferenc Molnar, Viola, and String Nonet (R. Mann, R. Koff,
F. Chaplin, R. Shapey, Violins; R. Hillyer, S. Paeff, Violas;
C. McCracken, C. Ziegler, 'Celli; S. Sankey, Bass)

Copland:
Sextet for String Quartet,
Clarinet and Piano

Kohs:
Chamber Concerto for
Viola and String Nonet

The present project for recording modern American music comes out of a conversation between an American composer and an official of Columbia Records Inc., in which the composer alleged that the gramophone companies were neglecting their duty. "American music gets published and performed all over the world nowadays, but the recording companies pretend it doesn't exist. And every year the backlog of unrecorded American music gets vaster." That is what the composer said to the business man.

The business man replied to the composer, "I'll change all that if you will show me how to do it."

So together they made out the following plan. Columbia will record a minimum, in this series, of six "Lp" Records (12 sides) a year of modern American music, the works to be chosen by a committee of American composers serving without pay. These works will be recorded in each case by artists of the composer's choice working under his immediate direction or supervision. The performances will therefore be authentic as well as first-class. And the works will represent, in the judgment of the composers' committee, American music at its most distinguished and beautiful.

The committee has sought to avoid the duplication of works already available to the public in recorded form or announced for early release by other companies. Music by committee members will be included in the series in selections made by the others members of the committee. Chamber music has been chosen as the

present repertory of the project, because that is the field of American music that has hitherto received the least attention from recording companies.

Our first series of releases is the result of over a year's work. Composers and performers, as well as the engineers and executant personnel of Columbia Records Inc., have labored with devotion to make these recordings both excellent in themselves and faithful to the composers' wishes. They represent in a notable collaboration American composition at its best and contemporary performing skills at their highest. The committee sincerely hopes that the public will find them, as we do, pleasing in many different ways.

The Committee

Virgil Thomson, Chairman
Music Critic, New York Herald Tribune

Aaron Copland
Chairman of the Faculty,
Berkshire Music Center

Henry Cowell
Professor of Composition,
Peabody Institute of Music,
Baltimore, Md.

Goddard Lieberson
Executive Vice-President,
Columbia Records Inc.

William Schuman
President,
Juilliard School of Music

Copland: Sextet for String Quartet, Clarinet and Piano (1937)

Aaron Copland's Sextet for String Quartet, Clarinet and Piano is a chamber music version of that composer's *Short Symphony* (No. 2). The Symphony was composed in 1933, the Sextet in the Summer of 1937 during a visit to Mexico. So far as music goes, the two versions are identical.

The first performance of the Symphony was given in 1937 by the Orquesta Sinfónica de Mexico in Mexico City, Carlos Chavez conducting. The Sextet was first played at Town Hall in New York City in 1939 by a graduate group from the Juilliard School.

The work is in three movements — fast — slow — fast. Each movement is based on two themes.

After its first performance in Mexico City, Chavez wrote to Copland about the *Short Symphony* as follows:

"The dialectic of this music, that is to say, its movement, the way each and every note comes out from the other as the only natural and logically possible one, is simply unprecedented in the whole history of music. The work as a whole, I mean to say in its entirety, is an organism, or body in which every piece works by itself 100% but whose mutual selection is such, that no part could possibly work and exist without the other . . . and yet the human concept, the inner expression is purely emotional. It is precisely that tremendous human impulse which made possible such realization."

Arthur Berger has referred to the *Short Symphony* as probably the most successful work of that period in Copland's career, and he has called it "absorbing in its ingenuity and its provocative elements." Berger has also written of Copland's "declamatory style," and he has said that the most remarkable expression of it is the first movement of the *Short Symphony* which opens with a "provocative idea, at once playful and frantic, verging on the neurotic. If one conceives of the driving quality of the theme prolonged unrelentingly for some five minutes, it will be understood why the work waited more than ten years for its United States premiere."

Kohs: Chamber Concerto for Viola and String Nonet (1949)

The Chamber Concerto was composed in 1949 for Ferenc Molnar, formerly a member of the Roth String Quartet and more recently solo viola of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. The work was given its first performance, with Mr. Molnar as soloist, in Berkeley, California, on December 13, 1949.

Born in 1916 and now teaching at the University of Southern California, Ellis Kohs has supplied the following information about his composition:

"The title is intended to imply a work which bridges the gap between the large, virtuoso concerto with full orchestra, and the chamber music style which involves an interplay of more equal members in a smaller ensemble. The Concerto is in three movements, but not in the conventional fast-slow-fast sequence: rather, it is arranged as moderately fast — very fast — slow.

"The first movement (*Moderato molto energico*, 4/4) opens with the soloist at once, without introduction. The opening theme is characterized by rapid double-stop figuration in the solo viola. A more contrapuntal section leads shortly to the bridge section (tutti, unison), and then to the second theme which is given to the viola over a light pizzicato accompaniment. A short cadenza and retransition lead to a restatement of the principal and second themes, slightly modified. A brief codetta brings the movement to an energetic conclusion.

"The second movement, a *scherzo*, has four principal sections, ABCA, and coda. A is quite fast, in 3/8, rather brusque and wild. B is somewhat more leisurely and gracious, though there is still an occasional outburst of severity. C provides still greater contrast: it is still slower, even more gracious, and a little playful. This section is itself a miniature *scherzo-and-trio*, modelled after classical patterns. (The trio achieves special warmth by using violas and 'cellos without the violins). There is a sudden return to A, and a short coda based upon material from B and C.

"The final movement (*Andante contando*, 5/4) is a species of variation, not too unlike the *passacaglia*. The opening statement is in the solo viola over pizzicato chords. In the first variation, the theme is given to the violins in a chorale-like setting; the viola enters midway through the variation, but only as an obbliga to accompaniment. The second variation finds the theme in the 'cellos and bass, while the viola plays improvisatory, cadenza-like passages over it. Later the theme is played in octaves by the nonet while the viola weaves around it. Variation three opens with a short unaccompanied cadenza in the solo; gradually the other instruments enter on sustained trills. A transition reminiscent of first movement material leads to the fourth and final variation, which is similar to variation one, but has an added viola obbliga. The viola finally assumes the dominant role again, takes over the theme, extending it, while the bass plucks, hesitantly, the opening phrase of the theme. The movement ends quietly and peacefully, though uncertain as to tonality, for the bass and solo viola end in C, while the rest of the ensemble retains its chord on E, established seventeen measures before the close."

Other recordings in Columbia's Modern American Music Series are as follows:

Charles Ives: Piano Sonata No. 1 (1902-1909). William Masselos, Piano
ML 4490

Virgil Thomson: Stabat Mater. Jennie Tourel, Mezzo-Soprano, with The New Music String Quartet • Virgil Thomson: Capital, Capitals. Joseph Crawford, Clyde S. Turner, Tenors; Joseph James, Baritone; William C. Smith, Bass, with the Composer at the Piano • Lou Harrison: Suite for 'Cello and Harp. Seymour Barab, 'Cello; Lucille Lawrence, Harp • Lou Harrison: Suite No. 2 for String Quartet (1948). The New Music String Quartet
ML 4491

William Schuman: String Quartet No. 4 (1950). Juilliard String Quartet • Ingolf Dahl: Concerto a Tre (1947). Mitchell Lurie, Clarinet; Eudice Shapiro, Violin; Victor Gottlieb, 'Cello
ML 4493

Douglas Moore: Quintet for Clarinet and Strings (1946). David Oppenheim, Clarinet, with New Music String Quartet • Wallingford Riegger: String Quartet No. 2, Op. 43. New Music String Quartet
ML 4494

Walter Piston: Sonatina for Violin and Harpsichord. Alexander Schneider, Violin; Ralph Kirkpatrick, Harpsichord • John Cage: String Quartet (1950). New Music String Quartet
ML 4495

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ML 4492
NONBREAKABLE

SIDE 1
(XLP 7732)

First Movement: Allegro Vivace
Second Movement: Lento
Third Movement: Finale

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MASTERWORKS

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ML 4492
NONBREAKABLE

SIDE 2
(XLP 7169)

Band 1: First Movement: Moderato molto energico

Band 2: Second Movement: Scherzo; Vivace

Band 3: Third Movement: Andante Cantando

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